



Farm News from March

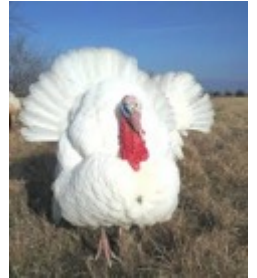
Almost 2 years ago I purchased an old snow blower to fit on the front of my 55 year old John Deere tractor. With near impassable snow conditions this year I kept thinking, "I've got to get that snow blower working" but farms are full of projects on the "Things to Do" list. The snow kept coming. Finally the



connections were made and the blower and tractor became a unit. A mean machine, we were ready for the next snowfall. But now that I can finally cross snow blower of my list the snow has backed off. This could be a sign of spring?

I was so excited! An old breed of turkey rediscovered. The Beltsville Turkey is a white turkey that finishes at a smaller size than the ones I've been raising for the past couple of decades. "Do you have anything smaller" is the common question at the Farmers Market at Thanksgiving and Christmas. True, a 46 pound turkey could be a little shocking but the average size was 25 pounds, still too big for most new age dinner tables. The Beltsvilles' finish as a nice plump bird around 8-16 pounds. But there was a problem. The turkey was on the "critical list" of endangered varieties and the map showed one breeder in Canada. I went to visit the breeder and found

out she was hoping to retire from poultry. She offered me her birds, 6 hens and one tom. I was honoured. Having hatched thousands of turkeys eggs before and with egg laying season approaching I could keep the variety going and satisfy those market customers who don't like leftovers. That great idea is on hold however, due to the next story.



When I first started raising poultry there were 3 processing facilities within an hour and a half of the farm. One by one they closed their doors until there was one left in the province. Now that one has closed leaving almost no options for small farmers in Alberta who want to raise and sell chickens and turkeys. Raising a few birds was always a good way a farm kid could earn some money and learn some responsibility. This will be my first year in decades that I will not be ordering chicks.



I saw an ad "Selling complete herd of Red Wattle pigs". A rare breed listed as "threatened". No poultry but more pigs? Welcome to your new home Red Wattles!

